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New York

President: Mr. Essy . . . . . (Côte d'Ivoire)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Seniloli (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 89 (*continued*)

Environment and sustainable development

(d) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84 and Add.1 and Add.2)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.4)

Mr. Talpur (Pakistan): At Rio de Janeiro, with the adoption of Agenda 21, we launched a historic process which led to the finalization of the convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification. The culmination of this process at the Paris signing ceremony is a recognition, not only of the fact that the international community is fully conscious of the ravages caused by drought and desertification, but also of its commitment to deal with this problem.

This is no longer a problem affecting a few countries which are left to cope with it on their own, but one of global dimensions. The international community, through this Convention, has undertaken the responsibility of dealing with the issue in a collective manner within an operational framework that calls for strengthened partnerships. The Convention is the first international and legally binding instrument deriving from the Rio Conference that links environment and development.

In countries affected by desertification and drought, the twin menace has grave socio-economic consequences. It affects every aspect of human activity. The Convention therefore recognizes that "desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics".

The problem of desertification and the effects of drought affect an estimated 900 million people in over 80 countries. Within these countries, those touched are among the poorest and the most marginalized. These problems stunt economic growth and development and have in some cases led to the impoverishment of many a developing country.

Poverty has grave socio-economic implications and is destroying the present world order. Societies have begun to disintegrate as people compete for increasingly

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scarce resources. This scarcity of resources, especially of food stocks in the developing countries, has led to internal strife. Every year, one or two countries descend into internal political chaos because they can no longer provide sustenance and hope for their peoples. The spreading chaos can no longer be quarantined behind barbed wire to protect the islands of the privileged. The affluent countries are unable to insulate themselves. Failure to deal with desertification and the effects of drought accelerates the process of impoverishment of the people in dry lands and exacerbates the emergency cycle of famine and drought relief, thereby diverting resources badly needed for addressing long-term issues of development. The adoption of the Convention provides the international community with the tools it needs to deal with the issues of poverty and food scarcity, which are multiplied in countries afflicted with drought and desertification.

I have the honour to inform this Assembly that Pakistan signed the Convention at the Paris ceremony. The economy of Pakistan has an agricultural base and we are increasingly concerned at the rapid loss of good cultivable land to the expanding deserts. The loss of such land has brought immense misery to the small landowners and tillers. Families have been uprooted in the provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan, the North West Frontier and Punjab as land erosion sets in. In search of a livelihood, such farm-based families are forced to migrate to larger cities. To stop such human suffering is of critical importance to the Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Every inch of agricultural land is precious to us and therefore our commitment to the Convention rises out of our own immediate concerns as do our efforts to work together with the international community to deal with this environmental problem, which directly affects the lives of millions of human beings.

The Convention and its annexes form a legally binding instrument. Signing it is therefore a declaration of intent on the part of all signatories that the obligations identified in the document are binding upon them.

The adoption of the Convention also reflects a tacit agreement that the African countries afflicted by these two problems require immediate attention. We stand by our brethren from Africa and sincerely hope that the implementation of the Convention will assist them in their efforts to alleviate some of their economic problems, which are the direct result of these twin problems.

The actions taken by the developing countries at the national level to implement the Convention not only require political commitment but also substantial new and additional resources. The increased resources are critical for developing countries to reclaim the land swallowed by deserts. According to estimates, nearly $22 billion will be required annually over the next 20 years to finance the rehabilitation of land and halt the decline in fertility. Such additional resources would be difficult to generate in the already financially strapped developing countries.

It is quite clear that adequate technology and know-how are critical for land reclamation. Such technology is available in the developed countries that have decades of experience with such problems. It is therefore essential that the developed countries step in with adequate new financial resources. Such resources should be made available to the signatories of the Convention that have reflected their commitment to dealing with this issue through national action but are unable to implement their programmes in this area due to a lack of resources.

In Pakistan we have attempted to undertake some remedial measures through reforestation projects and the construction of tube-wells. Within the context of our national conservation strategy, and linking it with the social action programme vigorously pursued by the present Government, we have launched land-reclamation projects and projects to support displaced and impoverished families. The problem is large and the resources of the Government limited. We look forward to any additional resources that can strengthen our hand in carrying out our efforts to combat the onslaught of desertification and land erosion.

We are convinced that the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office of the United Nations Development Programme can play an extremely important role in assisting the developing countries in the implementation of the Convention. That Office can provide advice to developing countries on acquiring the required expertise. We welcome the decision of the Administrator that following the adoption of the Convention the Office will now deal with the needs of all countries facing the problems of drought and desertification.

The arduous journey of drafting a legal document is over. We are now stepping into its implementation phase. In order to ensure that the Convention does not become just another well-bound document in the archives, political commitment at the highest level is essential. Implementation will require concrete national action with appropriate international support.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Last week in Paris, at the ceremony hosted by the Government of France, my Government, together with those of many other States, signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. The Convention is an important achievement, and the number of signatories augurs well for its prompt entry into force.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of France for hosting this magnificent ceremony. I also extend my appreciation to Mr. Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Negotiating Committee, for carrying out his most difficult responsibilities with such consummate skill. I wish also to thank Mr. Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Negotiating Committee, and all the others who worked so hard to complete the Convention. We must now bend our efforts to securing its prompt ratification and to finishing the work necessary to ensure its full implementation. In the light of the momentum we have generated, I am convinced that we can overcome any difficulties that may arise at the next session of the Negotiating Committee early next year, and I assure the Assembly of the full cooperation of my Government towards that end.

As the Convention explicitly states, desertification is interwoven with a variety of economic and social issues, and a comprehensive approach is therefore needed if the problem is to be successfully addressed. The Tokyo Declaration, adopted at the conclusion of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Japan, also emphasizes the importance of taking measures to assist Africa and enhance its self-reliance. My Government sincerely hopes that TICAD follow-up activities will dovetail with efforts to implement the Convention and thereby accelerate progress towards the sustainable development of Africa. For its part, Japan has steadily increased its development assistance to Africa in a wide range of areas. For example, it has worked to increase food supplies and food production, to improve health care and sanitation, to build capacity and to promote human resources development. It has increased the cooperation it has provided to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Development Bank and the World Bank, particularly in connection with their efforts to assist sub-Saharan African countries. And it has announced a plan to increase official development assistance for environmental projects to the level of 900 billion to 1 trillion Japanese yen — that is, $7 billion to $7.7 billion — over the five-year period from 1992 through 1996, and for projects related to population and HIV/AIDS to $3 billion for the period 1993 to 2000, assistance that will go to developing countries in Africa and elsewhere.

One programme of assistance particularly relevant in the context of the Convention is the African Programme for the Supply of Potable Water, which provides grant aid for the development of groundwater and water-supply systems. Approximately $250 million to $300 million in such aid has been allocated to it for fiscal years 1993 through 1995. Used in combination with development studies, the grants are aimed at achieving the following three objectives: first, ensuring access to potable water; secondly, developing groundwater systems to improve people's living environments; and, thirdly, relieving women and children of the hard daily labour of drawing and carrying well water. Approximately $98 million in grant aid was disbursed in fiscal year 1993 to fund 17 projects in 15 African countries.

I should like to make a few comments with respect to the measures that we intend to take in order to assist the implementation of the Convention, particularly in the context of the "prompt start" process.

First, Japan will strengthen the dialogue it conducts with those countries affected by desertification and drought on whether the projects carried out with Japanese official development assistance are actually helping to combat desertification. Secondly, we shall dispatch survey missions to countries severely affected by desertification or drought, particularly in Africa, to further clarify needs in the field. Thirdly, we will be actively involved in developing a coordinating mechanism to assist in the formulation of a programme of action to combat desertification in the most affected countries.

The signing of the Convention is an important achievement, but, as I noted at the outset, we must now move on to realize the goals it envisages. It is my hope that our efforts will meet with success.

Ms. Yang Yanyi (China) (*interpretation from China*): I make this statement on behalf of the Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China.

In June this year, the international community adopted the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. This marks the first step of the international community in implementing

Agenda 21 adopted by the Rio Conference. The Convention is also the first global agreement in the field of prevention of desertification. The countries of the world have all attached great importance to the negotiations on this Convention and many Heads of State and cabinet ministers delivered speeches emphasizing the importance of the Convention for the global environment and the welfare of mankind. After more than a year of work, the Convention was finally concluded ahead of schedule. We welcome the conclusion of the Convention.

The problem of desertification has seriously affected all regions of the world and threatened the lands and living resources of one quarter of the world's population.

In particular, land degradation and continued drought in developing countries have had exceptionally grim consequences for the local population. Desertification has accelerated the process of impoverishment which, in turn, has aggravated the problem of desertification. Undoubtedly, this will directly affect the realization of the noble goal of sustainable development.

China is faced with the same problem of desertification and almost half of its population is threatened. The direct economic losses caused by this problem have reached as high as $500 million each year. The Chinese Government is persevering in its efforts to combat desertification and has devoted enormous human and material resources to that end. We hope that the international community will lend its support to our efforts to check the process of desertification more effectively. The Convention has indeed been concluded at an opportune moment. We support it and hope that it will promote international cooperation in the prevention of desertification and alleviation of drought.

The Chinese Government sent a delegation to Paris headed by a cabinet minister to participate in the signing ceremony and to sign the Convention, and we are currently earnestly making all the necessary preparations for the implementation of the Convention and participation in international cooperation in the related areas.

The Chinese delegation believes that it is in the interest of such cooperation in related areas that the system of international cooperation was initially established by the Convention under the terms of which help will be given by developed countries to developing countries, and especially African countries, in the field of desertification prevention. In the course of negotiations, developed countries expressed positively their intention to join in such cooperation. For this, we wish to express our appreciation.

However, it should be pointed out that, generally speaking, rights and obligations defined by the Convention are not balanced. This is mainly reflected in the fact that developed countries have failed to undertake substantial commitments as to ways in which they can help developing countries fulfil Convention obligations, especially in terms of financial resources and mechanisms. Some international programmes of action in this field once existed. Shortage of financial resources was a major reason for past unsuccessful efforts to prevent desertification. According to statistics, the average *per capita* fund required for desertification prevention in the areas concerned should be $12, but the current actual fund for each person is only $1. This serious shortage of funds casts a dark cloud over the realization of Convention objectives.

The world's land surface is eroding from the effects of desertification and people of desert-ridden developing countries are living in untold misery. We urge the international community, and especially developed countries, to fulfil the commitments they made at the Rio Conference and to try their best to help developing countries by providing them with financial resources and technology. Only in this way can global desertification be genuinely checked in the interest of all mankind. China, as a victim of desertification and a developing country, is willing to work with other members of the international community in a concerted effort to realize the objectives set forth in the Convention.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the countries involved in the work of the political coordination and consultation machinery known as the Rio Group, that is, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Brazil.

I hope to be able to convey to the Assembly the hopes and fears of this group of countries with regard to the very important issue of the fight against desertification and drought. Its importance has been very properly recognized in this Hall by those who have already spoken. However, I deem it necessary to add a few thoughts with a view to expanding and perhaps enhancing the dialogue on this subject.

I should also like to express the profound appreciation of our countries for the outstanding job done by Ambassador Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the Convention. We are sure that his contribution played a decisive role as the complex negotiations unfolded.

Desertification is one of the four central issues that are being dealt with as priority items in the Commission for Sustainable Development. The other three are forests, biological diversity and land use. Our countries have been supporting the Commission's efforts to promote specific activities likely to attain the goals set with regard to sustainability. Desertification, along with the other sectoral issues, is thus an extremely important issue at the Rio Conference.

The affirmation I have just made on behalf of our countries is based on our deep awareness of the reality of life in our countries where both Governments and peoples throughout society are engaged in a permanent struggle against desertification and drought

We therefore take the view that the international community as a whole must also devote special attention to the challenge posed by desertification, just as it does in the treaties dealing with the related issues of biological diversity and forests.

To varying degrees drought and desertification have adversely affected 75 per cent of the land surface in Latin America. The degradation of the land in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas is the result of a number of factors, including climatic variations and human activity. In many parts of our region desertification is advancing at an astounding rate.

The main effects of the processes of desertification throughout Latin America are less and less fertile soils, a decline in crop yields, sedimentation, erosion and rising levels of salinity, to name just a few. These processes, which are cumulative and increasing, bring on many negative effects in the social, cultural, economic and environmental areas. In social terms, these factors engender poverty and migration away from rural areas, which leads to a deterioration in the quality of life for the people. It is felt that out of 200 million poor people throughout Latin America, some 40 million are poor precisely because of desertification. The situation is in fact worse yet when one recognizes that in our region we have one of the greatest reserves world wide of biological diversity.

I now focus, by way of an example, on the situation prevailing in the north-east of Brazil. In that region, 55 per cent of the land is threatened with desertification. The deterioration process has severely affected 4.3 per cent of the land; an additional 20.3 per cent is at risk; and we are witnessing an advance of desertification, albeit at a moderate pace, in a further 30.6 per cent. The problem in Brazil, therefore, is just as bad as it is elsewhere. More than 18 million people are affected, which translates into serious social pressures.

It should be stressed that this picture stems primarily from the deterioration of the terms of trade and from commercial trade practices that distorted the markets for the products of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. In social terms, we are all aware of the results: impoverishment, migration, domestic displacement and a serious deterioration of the quality of life of the local communities and of the people in general.

The countries of Brazil consider it necessary for major amounts of resources to be allocated to fighting desertification and drought if we are to achieve global and, therefore, lasting results. They consider it important to expand international cooperation so as to secure from the developed countries new and significant financial resources that are predictable, sustained and reliable. The appearance of such support would be proof of a genuine willingness to seek cooperative, world wide, effective and balanced solutions to the problems that confront all of mankind. We recognize also that the problem is of supreme importance as far as the African continent is concerned: of this there is no doubt.

Our countries fully endorse and subscribe to the content of chapter 12, section II, of Agenda 21, particularly as regards the proposals aimed at wiping out poverty, at promoting sustainable agriculture, at establishing systems of information and of monitoring, at developing, as a matter of priority, preventive systems in lands that have not yet suffered deterioration and at encouraging storage and transportation programmes. These elements, taken as a whole, would make an invaluable contribution to mitigating the problems of those who have become refugees because of drought. In this context, special consideration should be given to efforts devoted to educational programmes regarding environmental issues, technical training and, in particular, the support of local communities. All these are important issues in terms of the financing required, which is why international cooperation has to be brought into play decisively.

Just a few days ago the Convention on desertification was opened for signature in Paris. This Convention is part of a new category of international instruments arising from the Rio Conference. It follows a long-drawn-out process of negotiation, concluded only quite recently: over 18 months of negotiation were required in Nairobi, New York and Geneva before the Paris Agreement materialized in June of this year.

Many expectations and hopes were created and many plans were made. Alleviating poverty, lessening the suffering of local peoples the world over, sharing the benefits of development, improving health and the well-being of local peoples — these were the specific goals towards which we strove. We still face a difficult negotiating process, one in which the developed countries often depart from the spirit of the Rio deliberations, particularly with regard to the concept of global association — characterized by responsibility that is shared but also differentiated according to the degree of development attained by States — in order to reach the goals of sustainable development.

The negotiation that led to the Convention on desertification, has led, in practical terms, to efforts to reinterpret the Rio Conference consensus, particularly in terms of international cooperation. The negotiating process has been marked by conditionalities, revealing that the interest of certain developed countries in this convention was minor. Compare the content of related conventions, such as those on climatic change and biological diversity, which entail firmer and fuller commitments regarding the transfer of financial resources and of technology. Thus it is essential that the developed countries take a fresh look at where they stand and that they honour the commitments they assumed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in terms of financial support and the transfer of technology.

A number of Latin American Member States, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, have signed the Convention on desertification. This means that we also see many positive features in this instrument. We thus trust that the international community will take advantage of the opportunities opened up by this Convention and will translate into reality the cooperation the developing countries so yearn for. Our countries need to seek cooperative global solutions to the problems of desertification and drought inasmuch as these are problems that we share with all mankind. We therefore believe in concrete examples that can signal new courses of action on this planet. We share the concept that what we need is a genuine political will on the part of developed countries to contribute to the implementation of initiatives capable of breaking the vicious circle of desertification, of drought and, therefore, of poverty.

The countries of the Rio group, which share these views, hope and expect that implementation of the Convention will take place in spirit of what was agreed upon in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): The successful conclusion of the negotiations for the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, within the time frame set by this august body, and the consensus adoption of a Convention deserve commendation.

The negotiating process, which spanned 19 months, was not easy or smooth. Reaching an understanding, let alone a consensus, on certain provisions of the draft Convention was sometimes almost impossible.

Today, as we review the Convention and its regional annexes, the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment from 900 million people around the world affected by desertification is even greater. Congratulations are therefore in order and in this connection my delegation would like to congratulate Chairman Bo Kjellén, Ambassador Araba Jallow, the other members of the bureau and all participants who worked tirelessly and frankly to make the adoption of the Convention possible.

The need for an international Convention to combat desertification has alway been a crucial factor in Africa's negotiations on environmental issues and related problems. Desertification is a problem affecting all regions of our continent, with a negative impact on our sustainable development.

The Gambia, a Sahelian country, has suffered from severe periods of drought coupled with the threat of engulfment by a creeping Sahara desert. Since the 1980s drought has accounted for the reversal in the country's socio-economic development. Desertification has also aggravated the problems caused by drought. Annually, we lose a large number of livestock, and the migration of people in search of arable land and water is becoming more frequent.

The effects of desertification and drought on land degradation and the disruption of the ecological balance have always been a cause of concern to my Government. The serious efforts of my Government to combat desertification and mitigate drought through the allocation of greater resources and other measures have yielded some fruitful results but have not reversed the situation. It is for these reasons that my delegation welcomes the Convention and the resolution on priority action for Africa in implementation of the Convention.

Recognition of the global dimension of drought and desertification and their disruptive effects on one of the most priceless elements of mankind's heritage, our flora and fauna, followed by the recently adopted Convention to combat desertification and drought, will serve to deepen the international community's involvement and commitment.

Africa remains the region of the world worst hit by drought and desertification — to such an extent that there is an increasing loss of land productivity. The population-growth rate far exceeds the rate of food production; arid and semi-arid lands are being marginalized or wasted; and poverty and the displacement of people are on the increase. It is calculated that the income lost in these ways has risen from $26 billion in 1978 to $42.3 billion annually since 1991.

The adoption of the Convention signals the long-awaited concerted international effort and assistance. The Convention, which reflects the interests and concerns of States parties, gives a clear indication of the level and extent of the task involved as well as the type of contributions expected from all parties through international cooperation and partnership arrangements, including those made at the national, subregional and regional levels. The Gambia, in meeting its obligations under the Convention, will continue to review and improve its national action programmes in the hope of synchronizing them with those of other States parties at the subregional, regional and global levels. These programmes will be linked to the country's national sustainable-development policies.

The implementation of these programmes to combat desertification has involved considerable technological and financial resources that are beyond the capability of my country. These constraints, coupled with growing concern at the ever-present twin evils of drought and desertification, continue to strengthen our resolve that the best and most effective method to combat desertification and drought is to assume a collective global approach.

The successful and efficient operation of the global mechanism will depend on the collective support and contributions of all the States parties. It is only in this way that we can coordinate our efforts and develop realistic and coherent long-term initiatives in addressing desertification and drought. We call on the international community to continue to cooperate in the implementation of this Convention and in the so urgently needed provision of more coordinated assistance to Africa, which continues to suffer acutely and without respite from desertification and drought.

Lastly, my delegation strongly supports the adoption of a resolution that will enable the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to continue to function during the interim period before the Convention enters into force.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): It need hardly be recalled that the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, was an African initiative that received the support of the international community. This Convention, which arose from a recommendation in Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference, is a new step towards the goal of sustainable development. Thus, the Convention, that will now be known as the Paris Convention to Combat Desertification, was signed by 87 States on 14 and 15 October 1994 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

The Convention defines "desertification" as reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity resulting from deterioration of the properties of soil, from soil erosion, and from degradation and long-term loss of natural vegetation. In other words, the Convention allows the issue of desertification to be addressed in terms not only of its physical, biological or climactic causes but also its economic and social aspects, including the problem of poverty. It is thus a legal instrument that solemnly commits States parties to cooperating in a spirit of solidarity in taking up the global challenge of environment and development. Moreover, the global dimension of desertification and drought has been established by the recognition that priority must be accorded to Africa in the combat against desertification, as stated in General Assembly resolution 47/188 and forcefully reaffirmed in an operational annex

accompanying the annexes relating specifically to other regions.

The desertification Convention is a new approach to cooperation and partnership between North and South, between the industrialized and the developing countries, with a view to better mobilizing resources to combat desertification, either in the elaboration and implementation of programmes or in research and information technologies that stress traditional know-how and local technologies. The Convention is innovative because action will take place at every level and will be based on the effective participation of the affected populations and on cooperation with donors, international and regional institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The consultation process should result in partnership agreements that will ensure better coordination of bilateral and multilateral cooperative activities. The aim of the Convention is above all to help the populations of affected areas to establish the conditions of an environment conducive to sustainable development. Indeed, only concrete results in the field will allow us to gauge the effectiveness of programmes and measures intended to eradicate poverty and guarantee food security and renewed sustainable rural development. In this context, the Convention to combat desertification brings hope to those populations whose daily lives are affected by the scourge of land degradation and natural resources in arid, semi-arid and and dry sub-humid areas.

To be sure, an enterprise on such a scale requires financial and technical resources sufficient to combat desertification on Earth, where almost one billion men and women suffer from the effects of desertification and drought.

It is therefore urgent, through creative and fruitful international cooperation, to take up that challenge on the African continent — cradle of humankind, repository of immense potential wealth, but home, as well, to the two largest deserts in the world.

Against that background, the Commission on Sustainable Development will have to pay particular attention to the viable management of land and water resources; the utilization of soils; sustainable agriculture; forests, dry lands and mountains; and to sources of energy.

The Convention offers the possibility of solving those problems by relying on scientific and technical knowledge and by giving a powerful boost to the will to cooperate and to international solidarity.

In any case, the Convention, as a legal instrument, provides the tools and follow-up machinery to assess, through informatics and telecommunications, the promotion of the observation, collection, analysis and systematic exchange of data in matters of preventing drought and controlling desertification.

The Paris Convention on desertification is not a meaningless construct but rather the common achievement of all those who took part in difficult and serious negotiations aimed at defining the responsibilities and mutual obligations of all partners, for the greater good of humankind.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all the negotiators and to express our gratitude to the President of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Bo Kjellén, who directed the work of that group with great effectiveness and finesse.

Let me also express our gratitude to Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, that worthy son of Africa, who has been assuming competently and devotedly the functions of Executive Secretary of the Committee, assisted by a dynamic team whose reputation is well established.

Senegal, which signed the Convention, will as of now undertake the ratification procedure with the firm hope that this new instrument will allow us to better test the beginnings of a new spirit of solidarity and cooperation for sustainable development in all parts of the world, especially in Africa.

So let us look to the future, as did St. Exupéry, a poet of action, a great humanist and a man who knew about outer space and deserts, who said:

> "To be human means precisely to be responsible. It means feeling ashamed in the face of a poverty that does not seem to depend on oneself. It means that when laying a building block, you are contributing to building the world."

May this message, rich in fraternity, light our way in the struggle against desertification on the planet.

Closer to us, just a few months ago, Pierre Gilles deGennes, graduate of the *Ecole normale supérieure* and Nobel laureate in physics, said that the struggle against

desertification is a project that should mobilize technical and scientific knowhow, financial resources, the enthusiasm of youth and human solidarity.

For its part, Senegal feels that the commitments undertaken and the contribution announcements made, on both the bilateral and multilateral levels, at the signing ceremony of the Convention in Paris are a promising foundation for the future.

We are convinced that once the Convention is ratified and implemented, it will have to live up to the immense hopes raised by the advent of such an international instrument for combating desertification with the aim of fostering sustainable development in Africa and in the world.

Mr. Gallegos (United States of America): We have before us a number of issues regarding the recently concluded United Nations Convention on Desertification. These are procedural matters, with one important exception: the resolution on urgent action for Africa.

The United States signed the Convention in Paris on October 14, and we have been among its strongest supporters from the outset. The objective of this agreement is the sustainable development of dry lands worldwide. Its relevance to the economic development and environmental health of a significant proportion of the world's population is well known. Its implementation will be of critical importance in achieving food security and ending the threat of malnutrition and famine in Africa. The United States has identified approximately $500 million in current or planned projects which can be utilized to support the Convention in a number of ways.

The specific issues before us are as follows:

First, with respect to "Urgent action for Africa" (A/49/84/Add.2, resolution 5/1), this proposal calls on all parties concerned to begin taking steps to prepare for the implementation of the Convention, even before it enters into force. We strongly support this provision. The Convention mandates a locally initiated implementation process featuring partnership arrangements between local communities and non-governmental organizations, national Governments, and, where necessary, aid donors, centered in national capitals.

This process was designed to reflect the reality that circumstances vary greatly from country to country and that implementation cannot be driven by a formula imposed from outside.

Now is the time for African countries to begin considering how they want to use this Convention to meet their own anti-desertification priorities, to begin thinking about the kind of local partnerships they want, and to survey the state of their existing anti-desertification plans and programmes. The purpose of this resolution is to encourage support for this vital preparation phase so as to jump-start the implementation process when the Convention enters into force. We strongly support the resolution and trust that it will not be in any way controversial.

Secondly, with respect to the dates and duration of meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, the Committee's draft resolution (A/49/84/Add.2, resolution 5/2) was approved at the last Committee session in Paris. In the intense period of final negotiations, there was no time to discuss its contents. The two-week period was originally proposed at a time when it was believed that additional regional annexes would remain to be negotiated, but, thanks to the hard work of everyone concerned, all the annexes in question were approved.

The major challenge facing the Convention now is implementation of that "Urgent action". Other major policy issues, such as the organization to house the Global Mechanism — Article 21 — cannot be decided before the first session of the Conference of the Parties. As noted above, we see "Urgent action" as a process that must begin in African capitals. This is where our focus should be for the time being, and it is for that reason that we have proposed reducing the January session to one week only. None of us has the resources to devote to meetings of this kind unless they are absolutely necessary.

Similarly, we are not convinced that another two-week session in Nairobi in May is necessary. In our view, discussion of further meetings in 1996 and beyond should be deferred until the one-week January session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. I repeat that in our view the time and attention of all concerned should be focused on African capitals in the period between now and the first session of the Conference of Parties.

The responsibilities of the secretariat were the subject of considerable discussion at the fifth session of

the Committee, and the results are contained in article 23 of the Convention. Further modifications could be made by the Conference of Parties, in accordance with article 23 (2) (e). I mention this because at least one document now before us envisages a role for the secretariat considerably broader than that contained in article 23. I refer in particular to paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary General, document A/49/477 of 5 October 1994, which suggests that the secretariat should assume the considerable burden of reviewing the preparation of action programmes and other activities undertaken under the urgent-action resolution. We strongly believe that any resolution adopted at this time should be consistent with, and not go beyond, article 23 of the Convention, as well as paragraph 14 of the proposed draft resolution on urgent action and paragraph 5 of the proposed draft resolution on interim arrangements.

Mr. Eteffa (Ethiopia): My delegation would like first of all to congratulate Ambassador Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and Mr. Hama Arba Diallo and other members of the secretariat, for their tireless efforts in producing this exemplary international instrument.

We would like to endorse the statement made by Ambassador Lamamra of Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the very important issue under consideration.

We recall that during its forty-seventh session, in 1992, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/188, calling for the establishment of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, with a view to finalizing such a convention by June 1994. Thus, the International Convention to combat desertification and drought has been finalized on time and, in addition, a considerable number of countries have already signed, during the recent signing ceremony held in Paris. We commend this achievement and urge those countries that have not yet signed to do so as soon as possible. We also ask those countries that have signed the Convention to take all necessary measures to expedite the ratification process.

The finalization of the text of the Convention is a great stride forward in our endeavour to tackle the problems of drought and desertification. However, the Convention is not an end in itself. What is most important is that we should focus on implementing the objectives of the Convention. The question of speedy implementation of this international instrument is most relevant in Africa, where 50 to 60 per cent of the land area has been desertified and where millions of people face recurrent and devastating drought, famine and starvation.

It is true that all regions of the world suffer from desertification and drought, but the African nations are the most vulnerable and are the least able to combat these problems without meaningful international cooperation, partnership and assistance. That is why we in Africa are very concerned about the financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.

In this regard, my delegation would like to appeal once again to our partners in developed countries and in the United Nations system to make available adequate, timely and predictable financial resources and technical assistance, especially for the least developed and most severely affected African countries.

Moreover, a series of consultation meetings should be conducted between the adoption of the Convention and the first meeting of the Conference of Parties; it is imperative to ensure the effective participation in this process of developing countries, in particular the least developed among them. Therefore, my delegation appeals to Governments and organizations to make voluntary contributions to the extrabudgetary fund established under resolution 47/188.

Ethiopia, as one of the most severely affected countries, is fully aware of its responsibility to fight the problems of drought that threaten the lives of millions of its people. With this in view, the Ethiopian Government has taken important measures to mitigate the effects of recurrent drought. Recently we finalized a national conservation strategy and commenced a $1.2-billion-dollar forestry action programme. The decentralization and democratization process initiated by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia some three years ago has created an excellent environment conducive to the participation of the local people in the preparation and implementation of the development and environmental-protection action programmes. We in Ethiopia feel that the participation of the people at all levels is of paramount importance.

The Ethiopian Government has also adopted a disaster-prevention and preparedness policy and strategies and has established disaster preparedness committees at the central, regional, zonal and community levels. These and other measures taken by Ethiopia demonstrate the Government's commitment to combating drought and

desertification. However, we realize that national efforts will not bear fruit without the support of the international community. That is why we urge the immediate implementation of urgent action for Africa as stipulated in resolution 5/1 adopted during the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

The question of drought and desertification and how to combat them should be seen in the light of African economic and social development. The implementation of the objectives of the Convention should be carried out with the close cooperation of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity and other international and intergovernmental organizations. The solution to the multifaceted and critical problems of Africa can be found only in a unified and integrated approach to development. The Convention at hand should thus complement that approach by effectively addressing problems related to drought and desertification.

In the light of the critical and fast-deteriorating situation prevailing in Africa, the Convention, especially in its article 7, gives explicit priority to that continent. Therefore, my delegation feels that it is most appropriate that the Convention secretariat should be located in Africa. However, the question of the permanent secretariat, including its exact location in Africa, should be a subject of discussion during the Conference of Parties. My delegation will present concrete proposals in that connection at the appropriate time and place.

Mr. Pak (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Muthaura (Kenya): I wish to join the delegations that have spoken before me in welcoming the conclusion of the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

I wish also to express our congratulations to the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, and the Secretariat, in particular Ambassador Diallo, for having steered the negotiating process so ably within the time-frame and achieving this important Convention. It is significant that many countries have already signed the Convention, and some countries have already made substantial financial pledges in its support. We hope that the ratification process will be completed as quickly as possible so that the Convention may enter into force.

Countries such as my own, which are prone to drought and desertification, have great expectations from the implementation of the Action Programmes contained in the Convention. At the national level, Action Programmes embrace the mobilization of local populations and non-governmental organizations, as well as scientific and technological efforts, within an integrated long-term policy commitment for combating and mitigating the effects of drought and desertification. At the international level, a critical element in ensuring the success of the strategy, as envisaged in the Convention, is the establishment of a financial mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, with emphasis on multiple-source financing. In this regard, stress has been put on partnership agreements bringing together affected countries, developed and other countries as well as international organizations, to support the preparation and implementation of the Action Programmes. In our view, the concrete responses that the Convention will be able to attract from donor countries and international organizations in terms of resource allocations will, by and large, determine the impact the Convention will have on the local mobilization efforts to tackle the drought and desertification effects on the environment and achieve sustainable development. We therefore appeal to the donor community to make available sufficient resources to the Convention's financing mechanism.

It is fitting that the Convention on desertification and drought has been adopted at the time when the international community has adopted the Plan of Action for Population and Development and is preparing for the related World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Habitat II Conference, all of which are aimed at tackling the problems of poverty and environmental degradation and mobilizing efforts towards the achievement of sustainable development from different perspectives. Desertification and drought deprive the population of the basic requirements of livelihood, food, water, firewood and shelter. The impact of this scenario is experienced in Africa more than in other regions, inasmuch as 66 per cent of the continent is desert or dry land and 73 per cent of the agricultural dry lands are already degraded.

The interim measures which have been proposed by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, especially with regard to the need for an adequate financial allocation to support the interim secretariat and Committee meetings, are practicable and, therefore, we

support them. We also consider the proposal by the Secretariat for provisions to convene two Committee meetings in 1995, two meetings in 1996 and one meeting in 1997 to be reasonable for planning purposes, without excluding the possibility of additional meetings if the Committee deems them necessary.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank the countries that have generously contributed to the voluntary fund which supported the participation of delegations from developing countries in the negotiating process. We hope that the fund will be replenished to assist the participation of those delegations during the interim period.

Ms. Mompei (Botswana): Botswana, as one of the many countries around the globe, and particularly in Africa, which is grossly affected by both drought and desertification, welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

Botswana participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, at which countries displayed interest and concern on the issue of drought and desertification. Botswana's interest in this issue culminated in its participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

The adverse climatic conditions of Botswana dictate our need to recognize this important international initiative. In Botswana, the desert occupies about 80 per cent of the total land area. It is characterized by frequent and prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall patterns, sand layers of up to 1 metre or more in certain areas, unbearably high summer temperatures and a thinly distributed savanna-type of vegetation. In addition, the socio-economic factors, which include the unevenly distributed and fast-growing population, the concentrated livestock-rearing activities and the poor arable farming practices, aggravate the already vulnerable landscape of Botswana.

At the national level, land degradation has always been of major concern to Botswana. Different land ministries have drawn up policies and programmes and even enacted laws to address this issue. In 1990, my Government formulated a strategy and established the Botswana National Conservation Strategy Agency, whose aims are, first, to increase the effectiveness with which natural resources are used and managed so that interactions are optimized and harmful environmental side-effects minimized and, secondly, to integrate the work of the many sectoral ministries and interest groups throughout Botswana, thereby improving the development of natural resources through conservation and so forth.

The recommendations of the Rio Summit and now the Convention to combat drought and desertification will complement the existing national efforts to address these environmental issues. For instance, Botswana has prepared an action plan for the Boteti area, which is in the central part of the country, with the financial assistance of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Convention.

National efforts to combat desertification become meaningless if regional cooperation is lacking. In this context, Botswana has started to consult its neighbours to prepare the Kgalagadi-Namib Action Plan to combat desertification. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), which is a subregional body, can also be used to foster this kind of cooperation. It is hoped that this Plan, which includes Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, will in the foreseeable future welcome South Africa.

In conclusion, we urge the international community to work tirelessly towards achieving the objectives of this important Convention.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): The two scourges of desertification and drought assail all the regions of our planet and have increasingly and continually caused the disappearance of vegetation and fertile soils. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 raised the urgent need of facing up to this problem.

On 14 October last in Paris 87 States signed the international Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. This came about as a result of an African initiative decided upon in Abidjan in November 1991 and introduced in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The legal framework thus laid down assures a balance between recognition of the global nature of the desertification problem and recognition of the specific nature of regional situations.

The negotiating process was difficult, intense and rewarding. Ambassador Bo Kjellén deserves our gratitude for the devotion, experience and inexhaustible patience he

demonstrated in leading a particularly dynamic Bureau, with the assistance of an effective secretariat led by Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo. All involved should be thanked for the accomplishment of their task, which marked the beginning of a new stage in the battle against desertification and drought.

We now have a legal instrument that is innovative in many ways and that recognizes the integrated approach as a suitable way to achieve security for the environment and for development. The fight against desertification will thus integrate socio-economic and cultural realities within an environmental context. The annexed resolution on "Urgent action for Africa" envisages, *inter alia*, a partnership between local populations and non-governmental organizations in the development and execution of programmes of action, as well as the integration of programmes of action aimed at combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought into national policies for sustainable development.

Burkina Faso, which is the site of the headquarters of the Inter-State Committee on combating drought in the Sahel, has implemented a national programme of action for the environment whose elements are inspired by all of the foregoing. While Africa is not the only region affected and afflicted, it is there where the ravages of drought and desertification have occurred fastest and been most serious. The Sahel is evidence of this fact.

The phenomenon of desertification affects 25 per cent of our planet. Sixty-six per cent of the African continent is affected. Of the 600 million people in Africa, 185 million are affected, in more than 40 countries.

Given the lack of results from the Nairobi Programme of Action of 1977, the acuteness of this ecological problem and its repercussions on Africa's economy and social foundations have been such that only a concerted, solid and active strategy against desertification and drought could be seen as a beginning in solving a problem that, through both its extent and its effects, affects the entire planet.

This is fundamental. One can never emphasize too much that the necessary resources must be provided and the institutional financial and follow-up machinery called for in the Convention must become operational as early as possible.

My delegation places its hopes in resolute, vigorous implementation of the concept of partnership and solidarity in the fight against desertification so that those societies that have been weakened by this scourge can be restored to normalcy and so that, wherever the environment has been wounded, it can be healed to the greatest extent possible.

This must be done so that many, many human beings in many places can, as we dream in the Sahel, finally experience again the soft wind over the grass, heading for the trees in the distance.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965, I now call on the Observer for the Organization of African Unity.

Mr. Sy (Organization of African Unity): The Organization of African Unity welcomes the conclusion of the negotiations and the signing of the international Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. We see this as an important step towards the implementation of Agenda 21, as agreed upon by the international community in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

In this respect, my delegation would also like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Ambassador Bo Kjellén, the Executive Secretary, Ambassador Arba Diallo, and the other members of the Committee, all of whom ensured that the Convention was prepared by the deadline.

The Convention is very significant for Africa, as it is directly related to some of the primary issues at the heart of underdevelopment and the aggravation of poverty in many African countries. For many African countries desert encroachment and increasing bouts of drought are issues which deserve urgent solutions in order to increase agricultural output and to assure a better and higher standard of living for the growing population. In this context, African countries have, at both the individual and collective levels, felt that enough resources should be mobilized to cope with the technical demands and lead to a permanent solution. The devastating effects of desertification and drought must be checked if Africa is to have a firm basis for sustainable development.

With this objective in view, African countries have collectively, through the Organization of African Unity, worked very hard with their partners in the international community for the conclusion of an instrument which

would enhance their efforts at sustainable development. The high interest in, and dedication to, the implementation of the Convention is illustrated in the Council of Ministers' resolution CM/RES 1535 (LX) of June 1994, which *inter alia*, requests the OAU Secretary-General to take appropriate steps as part of the execution of the international Convention and the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa to establish institutional and operational links with regional economic communities and intergovernmental institutions.

The United Nations Convention to combat desertification is unique, as it is basically concerned with the elaboration of action programmes at the national and subregional levels, through a consultative and participatory process. Among other things, it consists of a strategy which underscores the participation of local populations and non-governmental organizations in the preparation and implementation of action programmes. Likewise, it encourages the integration of action programmes in national policies for sustainable development. All these policies, we believe, are vital for the implementation of the Convention.

However, the Convention will be meaningful in the context of sustainable development if it is implemented effectively and promptly. At this point, therefore, the OAU would like to call on the international community for increased political support for and commitment to its implementation. National Parliaments should speed up the process of ratification to ensure that the minimum of 50 ratifications by Member States required for the Convention to come into force is secured in the least possible time.

In addition, the question of funding should continue to be reviewed in order to enhance the Convention's coming into operation. The capacity of the Global Environment Facility to fund the Convention should be strengthened, and additional complementary funding arrangements should be provided when these are necessary. The whole world stands to benefit from living on a planet where the menace of desertification and drought is effectively contained.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda sub-item.

In accordance with the decision taken by the Assembly at its 30th plenary meeting, action on the sub-item will be taken in the Second Committee.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 89.

Agenda item 22

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/357 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.8)

Amendment (A/49/L.11)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution, issued as document A/49/L.8, and an amendment to it, submitted by Honduras, contained in document A/49/L.11.

I call on the representative of Germany to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Henze (Germany): A year ago, at the General Assembly's forty-eighth session, the 12 member States of the European Community requested the inclusion of the item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance" on the Assembly's agenda and initiated a draft resolution, which the Assembly subsequently adopted without a vote. In continuation of that initiative, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/49/L.8 on behalf of its 63 sponsors. I ask for the Assembly's indulgence as I read out the list.

The sponsors of draft resolution A/49/L.8 are: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eretria, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Viet Nam.

Before briefly outlining the contents of the draft resolution, I wish to thank sincerely all the delegations that have given it their support and contributed constructively to its drafting. I should also like to express our deep gratitude to the members of the Secretariat who have shared their experience with us.

The reason why we are submitting the draft resolution remains unchanged since last year. It is the catastrophic situation created by the massive presence of mines and other unexploded devices in countries that have experienced armed conflict, a situation that persists and has been further aggravated.

In the second preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/49/L.8 the Assembly would affirm its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded devices. Such devices have serious and lasting consequences for the populations of affected countries. They kill and maim, and they constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, to humanitarian aid operations, to reconstruction and economic development as well as to the restoration of normal social conditions.

In the third and fourth preambular paragraphs the Assembly would stress its grave alarm at the ever-increasing presence of mines and other unexploded devices as a result of armed conflicts. The Assembly would also express its deep concern that the number of mines laid each year exponentially outweighs the number that can be cleared during that time. As the Secretary-General pointed out in his report, between 2 million and 5 million mines are being laid each year, to add to the more than 110 million land mines that have already been laid in 64 countries around the world.

In the fifth and sixth preambular paragraphs, the Assembly would reiterate its dismay at the high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, and bear in mind the serious threat that they constitute to the safety, health and lives of personnel participating in humanitarian, peace-keeping and rehabilitation programmes.

In the seventh and eighth preambular paragraphs the Assembly would recall its resolution 48/79 relating to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its resolution 48/75 K, calling for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines.

In the following preambular paragraphs the Assembly would focus on the important role of the United Nations and on the measures and activities already undertaken.

In operative paragraph 1 the Assembly would express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and would take note with interest of his proposals, as well as of the contributions by Member States and others.

In operative paragraphs 2 and 3 the Assembly would welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of a voluntary trust fund to finance, in particular, information and training programmes relating to mine clearance and to facilitate the launching of mine clearance operations. The Assembly would also appeal to Member States and others to contribute to the trust fund.

The following operative paragraphs address the coordination role of the United Nations. In operative paragraph 6, the Assembly would commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to make use of available resources to strengthen that role and would encourage him to continue those efforts with a view to improving the effectiveness of assistance in mine clearance by the United Nations. In operative paragraph 8 the Assembly would urge Member States, regional organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to extend full assistance and cooperation to the Secretary-General and, in particular, to provide him with all relevant information and data, as well as other pertinent resources which could be useful in strengthening the coordination role of the United Nations.

Draft resolution A/49/L.8, which is before the General Assembly today, reflects the international community's great concern at the devastating effects of mines and other unexploded devices in countries emerging from armed conflict. On behalf of the sponsors, I should like to express the hope that it will be adopted without a vote.

I should like to use this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the European Union, Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

We have noted with interest the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report. Many of them need further careful analysis. Nevertheless, the tremendous accumulation of anti-personnel land-mines and other unexploded devices in countries emerging from armed conflict is an urgent problem that requires a strong and coordinated international response. It is precisely the urgency, indeed the immediacy, of the threat to the lives and health of a large number of civilians, especially children, that has prompted us to focus this draft resolution on the humanitarian aspect of the problem. Each month, more than 800 people are killed and

thousands more are maimed by unexploded devices, especially anti-personnel land-mines. Given the high cost of clearing land mines, in particular when maps or other records showing their locations do not exist, it is of paramount importance that the available resources be used effectively and in a coordinated manner.

The President: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be now closed.

It was so decided.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Land-mines are one of the most troubling problems confronting the international community in this post-cold-war period.

It is reported that the number of mines deployed is increasing by 500,000 to 1 million each year, and that they kill more than 800 people every month, while mine detection and clearance technology has not made much progress.

Land-mines obstruct the peace-building process conducted by the international community in the aftermath of conflicts. They hinder, and in some instances prevent, peace-keeping operations, the delivery of relief supplies, the repatriation of refugees and the rehabilitation and improvement of basic infrastructure, as the Secretary-General notes in his comprehensive report on this subject. Countries that have suffered through war must suffer further because of land-mines, which continue to impede the process of national reconstruction long afterwards.

The Secretary-General informs us that there are more than 110 million land-mines spread in 64 countries around the world — countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique — with 2 to 5 million more laid each year.

Since de-mining requires a tremendous investment of time and money, it is essential that the international community provide assistance to those countries engaged in such work. In this connection, my delegation would like to stress the urgency of promoting research and development in mine detection and clearance technology to make mine clearance activities safer and more efficient, and requests that the United Nations coordinate such research and development, in view of the failure of mine detection and clearance technology to keep pace with the rapid progress of mine technology. It is also important that the international community consider establishing a mechanism to restrict the production, use and transfer of all land-mines, especially anti-personnel mines.

Japan is pleased that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been named by the Secretary-General to be the focal point within the United Nations for all de-mining and land-mine problems, as well as to provide support, assistance and advice to other United Nations agencies. The United Nations should play the central role in providing assistance in mine clearance, with the cooperation of regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, and it is highly likely that the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as focal point within the United Nations will soon be further strengthened. In this context, my delegation takes note with great interest of the launching of the database on the land-mine problem by that Department, in cooperation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations — a database that is certain to become indispensable to the formulation of measures on de-mining. Japan also appreciates the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations to establish a set of standards of operation and safety procedures for mine action programmes, as they will facilitate coordination of the de-mining efforts of the international community.

We note with interest that a voluntary trust fund to finance, in particular, information and training programmes relating to mine clearance is being created under the management of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and request that the terms of reference, which are now being worked out with the Department of Administration and Management, be provided to Member States. Since adequate financing is necessary for the effective implementation of the programme, Japan will consider carefully the possibility of making a contribution to the trust fund after the terms of reference are issued. I would just add that Japan has provided assistance to de-mining operations in Somalia and Afghanistan, and in March of this year it gave $2.5 million to the United Nations Development Programme's Trust Fund for Capacity-Building in De-Mining Operations for Cambodia.

I have just heard the introductory statement on draft resolution A/49/L.8 made by the representative of Germany, Ambassador Henze, on behalf of the European Union. The draft resolution contains strong arguments and constructive proposals, and we note that it stresses the importance of coordination by the United Nations of activities related to mine clearance. My Government

appreciates the initiative taken by the member countries of the European Union in drawing the attention of the world to this most pressing problem, and it is honoured to join in sponsoring this draft resolution.

In concluding my statement, I wish to assure the President of the Assembly that the Government of Japan will continue to extend cooperation to efforts to clear mines from the battlefields of the world. Japan hopes that, for its part, the United Nations, with its extensive expertise and experience in this field, will make further efforts to coordinate the activities of the international community, individual countries and international and non-governmental organizations, so that together we can achieve an early solution to this problem.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): Mines and unexploded ordinance pose a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of millions of people — mostly civilians — throughout the world. Mines threaten peace-keepers and humanitarian workers and are a serious obstacle to development. Indeed in Cambodia the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified land-mines as the single biggest impediment to that country's rehabilitation. Canada took the lead in supporting the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre's continued operation following the withdrawal of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Twelve Canadians still form the nucleus of international support for the Centre.

Canada has been involved in 33 United Nations peace-keeping missions around the world. Close to 8,000 Canadian soldiers have risked their lives clearing mines in countries such as Kuwait, Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Five Canadians have been killed or injured. Our soldiers are today clearing mines in Cambodia, Croatia, Bosnia and Rwanda.

Canada welcomes the Secretary-General's report on assistance in mine clearance and commends the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a focal point within the United Nations for coordinating mine clearance and related activities.

We recognize that States have the primary role in mine-clearing activities, but the United Nations has an important role to play in assisting Member States. We believe that as a focal point for United Nations coordination, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs can provide invaluable assistance, particularly through mine-clearing information and training programmes. We also strongly support the United Nations's efforts to establish "country capacity for mine action" as part of its "nation-building" programmes.

Long after hostilities have ceased in a region, and when the world's attention may well be turned elsewhere, uncleared mines, often numbering hundreds of thousands, can pose an overwhelming threat to normal life and to development efforts. Countries must be able to establish and undertake mine-clearing programmes which will systematically and effectively ensure the safety of their citizens, thereby allowing the most rapid return of each country's development potential.

Canada welcomes the establishment of the voluntary trust fund for mine-clearing activities. Clearing mines is expensive. Resources are needed to ensure that the United Nations can fulfil its coordinating role successfully and efficiently. An example of that role is the current mine-clearing platoons already in the field in Mozambique, along with the secondment of technical advisers, the establishment of a school for trainees, and a tender for a management-training scheme. There is much to be learned from the Department of Humanitarian Affair's initial coordination programmes. We believe that these efforts can only lead to a greater coherence in all phases of United Nations involvement. For its part, Canada will continue to contribute to mine clearing in a variety of ways, primarily through peace-keeping operations. The Secretary-General has estimated that a typical mine-clearing operation costs between $300 and $1,000 per mine. Canada would hope and urge that other countries would demonstrate a comparable commitment to United Nations mine-clearance efforts by helping, directly or indirectly, to shoulder the financial burden.

My delegation is pleased to add Canada's name to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution before the General Assembly on assistance in mine clearance. Canada will continue to extend its direct support through the practical expertise and technical assistance it has sponsored throughout the years.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan): My delegation does not find it necessary to emphasize the disastrous effects of land-mines, which threaten the present generation of humanity, as well as the generations that will follow, in so many parts of the world. We are very grateful to the delegation of Germany, which, in cooperation with other Western European States, North European States and Australia, worked on the preparation of the draft resolution now before us in document A/49/L.8.

I recognize the great sympathy of these countries — Germany, Japan and Canada — whose representatives spoke before me, for those countries affected by land-mines. It is important to thank them because they are among the countries that are helping us, Afghanistan, in the work of mine clearance.

I wish to draw the attention of all those present here to the fact that this draft resolution is mainly of a procedural character. Although it contains some important points, it is mainly a repetition of what was said last year while taking into consideration a few facts.

We have been in contact with the delegation of Germany and have had a very friendly exchange of views. We are deeply concerned that with the advancement of technology, mines and other explosive devices are becoming increasingly non-detectable, or difficult to detect. That has been stated in the report but it should appear in one of the texts to be adopted as a resolution. We are deeply concerned at the number of mines equipped with anti-handling devices.

On the subject of mine-clearance activity around the world, it is important to recognize, as experience has shown, that the most cost-effective clearance teams are those composed of civilian mine-clearance workers recruited locally and trained by experts provided through international assistance. We must, therefore, call upon States and appropriate international organizations and non-governmental organizations to promote, as a matter of priority, scientific research aimed at the rapid advancement of mine-clearance technology.

The problem is that the production of land-mines is technologically advanced while mine-clearance technology lags behind. Something must be done and there are States and organizations that are able to do something.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/357 and Add.1) and especially the creation of a section within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to deal with the matter. But that new section is very small and cannot cope with all the responsibilities incumbent on it. In order to enhance the role of the existing mine-clearance section and to establish an office of mine clearing under the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, it is important that, among other things, the Secretary-General, should, first, study on a continuing basis the problems of land-mines and mine clearance in war-stricken countries.

Secondly, it should serve as a coordinating body for all the activities at the national, subregional and international levels to be performed by non-governmental organizations in the field of mine awareness, training, survey, mine clearance and scientific research for mine-clearance technology.

Thirdly, where appropriate, the office has to initiate tripartite agreements between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, non-governmental organizations and Governments concerned, thus ensuring successful mine-clearance awareness and training projects and programmes.

Fourthly, the office has to coordinate and promote the activities of Government and non-governmental organizations that are assisting the developing war-stricken countries by providing prostheses for adults and children who are victims of land mines and booby traps.

Fifthly, the office is to facilitate contacts and promote the conclusion of agreements between the most affected countries and the donor Governments and non-governmental organizations in the field of mine clearance.

All of that is important and is based on long years of experience by Afghanistan, the country most affected by land mines after a terrible war of aggression.

All these points will require many exchanges of views. Such exchanges are taking place now, but in a haphazard way. My delegation therefore, proposes that, since the question is urgent and is becoming progressively more disastrous with the passage of time, we decide to convene a global conference in 1995 to study the problem of land-mine and land-mine clearance. If the word "conference" seems too official, it could be called an international meeting of mine-clearance experts. The object would be to draft and adopt an international strategy on mine clearance, as well as ways and means of alleviating the disastrous consequences of land-mines in war-stricken countries.

With this in mind we have submitted the text of amendments which my delegation proposes to the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.8. The amendments address the broader activities of the Section in the Secretariat dealing with the question of mine clearance and the need for scientific research aimed at the rapid advancement of mine-clearance technology, and would request the Secretary-General to convene, in 1995,

an international meeting of experts on assistance in mine clearance, in order to promote the work of the United Nations and international cooperation in this field.

I therefore propose that all delegations sponsoring draft resolution A/49/L.8 study these points and, if they agree, on the amendments there will be no need to vote on them separately and they can be considered as included in the text. In that case, the delegation of Afghanistan will join the sponsors of the draft which, at this time, we consider insufficient.

Mr. Noterdaeme (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): May I begin by wholly associating myself with the statement made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union, who rightly emphasized the humanitarian aspect and urgency of assistance in mine clearance.

Two world conflicts left many regions in Belgium infested by mines and other unexploded devices. For more than 75 years and with an average of 3,200 interventions each year, my country has developed experience in matters of mine clearance. This know-how has been put into practice in Cambodia through the participation of a Belgian mine-clearance team working under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in cooperation with the Cambodian mine action centre. I take this opportunity to announce that Belgium has decided to maintain its contribution to this type of action within the framework of the United Nations.

In addition, on the basis of Belgium's experience I can speak about the scope of the problem. If three quarters of a century after the end of hostilities abandoned munitions continue to kill indiscriminately despite systematic mine-clearing actions, what will happen in countries where vast stretches of land are infested by millions of mines which have been blindly sown?

The great merit of the Secretary-General's report is that it has clarified the scope and complexity of the task before us as well as the urgent need to coordinate international efforts for assistance in mine clearance. The success of rescue operations, repatriation and of bringing people back into society, as well as economic recovery, will all remain compromised until we have settled the problem of mines.

The Secretary-General's designation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a focal point for assistance in mine clearance and the establishment of the Mine Action Section are important first steps towards solving this problem.

Another, no less important, aspect is that of the necessary financial resources. In this regard, Belgium hails the establishment by the Secretary-General of a voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine clearance, to which it will be able at this time to make a first contribution of $150,000.

There is another aspect the Secretary-General rightly mentioned in his report: the unchecked proliferation of mines and, in particular, of anti-personnel mines. At a time when we are seeking solutions to the presence of these devices, we note that the number of anti-personnel mines laid, often in a non-selective way, exceeds the number of mines which have been neutralized. International preventive action is therefore more than ever necessary to limit that proliferation.

In this respect, in July 1993 the Belgian Government announced an open-ended moratorium on the export and the transit of anti-personnel mines. In direct implementation of that decision, the Belgian army will begin to destroy its surplus stocks of anti-personnel mines following its restructuring. Furthermore, all mine-laying vehicles will be modified. These decisions will cost money, but they are the result of a clear moral choice: to outlaw all anti-personnel mines for ever.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the crucial role of the conference to review the 1980 inhumane weapons Convention. Belgium is participating in the work of the group of experts that is preparing for that conference, with priority being given to the review of Protocol II. Belgium is now in a position to announce that the process for ratification of the inhumane weapons convention has been completed and that the instruments of ratification will very soon be deposited at the United Nations. Belgium will therefore participate in the 1995 review conference as a State party.

While it is true that, as Mr. Eliasson said when he was the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the presence of mines in countries is a war of time bombs, it is just as true that some countries can lose that war if the international community does not coordinate and intensify its efforts to help them overcome their tribulations.

The draft resolution before the Assembly is an important step in that direction. I would therefore like to

conclude by expressing the hope that it will be adopted, as a similar draft resolution was last year, by consensus and with a maximum of sponsors.

Mrs. Vidal (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The international community has begun to be aware of the tragedy that the production, proliferation, and exportation of conventional weapons constitute for mankind. Wars strike at countries' social and economic development, sidetracking them from the natural path of development and progress to which they rightly aspire in a world where inequalities are becoming virulent and unacceptable on the eve of the twenty-first century.

Therefore, exporting countries must renounce the selfishness that comes from mercantilism, forgo the fat profits amassed at the cost of the devastation of defenceless peoples, and adopt genuinely effective measures to alleviate the suffering of thousands of men, women and children, mainly in developing countries. These are the innocent victims of the sale and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons, among which we must especially condemn anti-personnel mines, true "crops of death", as they have been quite rightly dubbed by one of the major Colombian media.

Our country has for a number of years been exerting efforts to make the international community aware of the disastrous social, political and economic effects of arms transfers — in particular, illegal arms trafficking. Colombia agrees with the following observation made by a delegate at a recent meeting of the International Committee of the Red Cross:

> "Mines can be described as combatants that never miss a shot, that attack indiscriminately, that carry concealed weapons and that victimize people long after the cessation of hostilities. Mines are the greatest violators of international humanitarian rights and practise an inconceivable kind of terrorism".

Supporting that quotation are the figures disclosed in the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/357, where he estimates that there are more than 110 million unexploded land-mines spread in 64 countries, that between 2 and 5 million more are being laid each year, and that more than 800 people per month — people who are not involved in any conflict — are killed or suffer permanent injury as a result of the ever-increasing presence of mines, especially in agricultural areas.

We therefore welcome the initiatives concerning mines that have been moving forward in the General Assembly, both on assistance in mine clearance and on the proposed moratorium on the exporting of anti-personnel mines. We believe that the success of these initiatives will set in motion a process that can lead to the solution of the global problem created by international transfers of conventional weapons — in particular, by illegal trafficking in them.

The point made in the Secretary-General's report that mine clearance could cost between $300 and $1,000 per mine gives us an idea of the enormous global cost of clearing the 110 million unexploded mines to which I have referred earlier. And this does not include the millions of mines being laid every year in various countries. In this context, we believe that the total prohibition of the production, development, stockpiling, sale, exportation and use of mines in all their forms and manifestations is the only response that we can give to the affected peoples. We therefore consider it vital to continue to press at all the competent forums for their elimination.

We wish to stress that civilians in countries where there are internal conflicts suffer horrendous wounds. This is contrary to the fundamental principles of human rights. The ease with which mines can be obtained by the parties involved is one of the factors impeding a peaceful solution to these problems. The mines leave permanent fields of death, which become a burden far too heavy for States to bear. We are now seeing examples of this in various parts of our continent and others.

Thus, we agree with the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/275 on a moratorium on the exporting of anti-personnel land-mines. As indicated there, a moratorium would be easier to implement, monitor and verify, and it would guarantee more than any other measure that the indiscriminate killing and maiming of civilians occurring nowadays would ultimately cease.

The human tragedy, the problems in the normal cultivation of crops in the afflicted countries, and the high cost of clearance are, among other factors, reason enough to work together to achieve the total cessation of the production and exportation of mines. Hence, although we support the initiative of the European Union, we greatly regret that it does not contain proposals for the total eradication of the problem, by its roots. However, we hope that today's discussion will contribute to laying

the groundwork for the attainment of that goal in the near future.

With regard to the proposal to set up a trust fund for the clearance of mines, we believe that the countries producing and exporting mines, as well as those that are parties to conflict, must shoulder a special responsibility for participating in an activity that harms the physical health and the social and economic well-being of peoples and constitutes a crime against mankind.

We support the efforts being made at various forums to find a definitive solution to mine-related problems and, in general, to illicit trafficking in arms. Our purpose here must absolutely be to ensure that our commitments alleviate the suffering of the peoples affected and defend their right to life and to economic and social progress.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand wishes to compliment the Secretary-General on his excellent report on the humanitarian problem posed by mines and on this Organization's vital role in confronting it. The report is noteworthy for its comprehensive account of the scale of the problem. The rate of proliferation of these weapons, their awful toll on civilians and the yawning gap between mine-laying and mine-clearance rates make imperative the efforts by the international community to restrict the availability of mines. New Zealand hopes that the opportunity will be taken in next year's review of the inhumane weapons Convention to strengthen the provisions relating to mines and that more Members than the current 40 will become parties to the Convention.

In addition, we were most interested in the comments made by President Clinton in his address to the General Assembly last month about proposals for the elimination of the world's 85 million anti-personnel land-mines. We look forward to working with the United States delegation in the elaboration of that proposal in the First Committee.

New Zealand has a solid record of support for this Organization's efforts in mine clearance. Over the past five years, we have made available specialist personnel for United Nations de-mining programmes in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique. We continue to participate in the work of the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre and to contribute financially towards its costs. In Mozambique, at the United Nations request, we have made available a senior military officer who took up the position of Deputy Director for De-mining in August this year in an effort to get that de-mining programme back on track. We have also provided eight de-mining instructors for the programme.

The Secretary-General has commented in his report upon the rapid expansion since 1988 in the demands upon the United Nations to provide assistance in mine clearance. We appreciate that the Organization has had to strive hard to keep pace. There is no concealing the fact that it stumbled in Mozambique, as reported by the Security Council mission which visited that country. On the other hand, it is encouraging that steps have been taken to remedy that situation. In this regard, the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthening coordination within the Organization are most timely.

The Secretary-General's report acknowledges that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of United Nations assistance. It emphasizes most appropriately the need for the centralized compilation of lessons learned. We believe that the recommended allocation of primary responsibility for the mine-clearance field programme and headquarters support to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is sensible. We strongly support the creation of a new mine action section in the Department and the provision of the necessary staff positions through appropriate adjustments. New Zealand would also be prepared to consider contributing to the Department's proposed stand-by capacities, such as the short-term assignment of instructors or other personnel.

The Secretary-General's recommendations on the creation of a national capacity for mine clearing are also important. My delegation considers that the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre provides a useful model in this regard. From the experience of New Zealand personnel who have participated in mine-clearance programmes, we are convinced that local involvement, local management and a local stake in mine-clearance operations are basic and essential. In our view local, participation should begin as early as possible in the process with a view to encouraging local ownership of the programme and local initiative.

The valuable contribution made by non-governmental organizations in mine clearance should also be recognized. A timely approach to readying these organizations for operations could obviate the need for contractors in many instances. Improved liaison with non-governmental organizations will have benefits.
Recent operations have demonstrated that there is considerable military expertise available in de-mining, including expertise in providing instruction. This expertise could be channelled into assistance to non-governmental organizations to help them form their own de-mining training and supervisory teams should

they wish to participate in this way. We believe that a significant multiplier effect in terms of generating trained personnel and freeing up capacity for stand-by contributions could be gained as a result.

Finally, my delegation looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution on this item. We are pleased to be a sponsor.

Mr. Castaneda Cornejo (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Central American countries — Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador — on agenda item 22, entitled "Assistance in mine clearance".

At the outset, I should like to reiterate on behalf of our delegations our sincere congratulations on the outstanding way in which Mr. Essy is guiding the work of this session. We have no doubt that in the end we will have made important strides on the difficult road towards international peace and security.

On the issue before us, our subregion deems it of particular importance, given the painful and tragic experience our own countries have endured from the harmful and continued impact of land-mines and other unexploded devices planted in various areas throughout Central America as a result of armed conflicts. This position, underscored by our co-sponsorship in 1993 of resolution 48/7, introduced at the initiative of the members of the European Union, on assistance in mine clearance. In that resolution, the serious problems caused by mines sown in various regions and the responsibility of States to contribute to their clearance are recognized.

For Central America, the importance of the issue is not confined to the situation in our subregion alone, but extends to the situation in other regions, where the gravity and magnitude of the problem have dimensions that may be termed catastrophic. In this context, the initiative of introducing the item on the General Assembly's agenda and of considering the problem in depth at the global level in an effort to find better forms of coordinating our work and adopting measures to come to grips effectively with this issue — which has been described as an affront to all humanity — deserved and deserves our full support.

We have read with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/49/357 and Add.1). We wish to express our thanks and appreciation for its breadth and depth, which reflect the nature and extent of the problem of land-mines and other explosive devices buried during armed conflicts, both domestic and international. It also portrays the tragedy of people who have suffered the effects or the potential innocent victims of these devices and, in general, their negative impact on society as a whole.

The human tragedy resulting from the existence of mine fields and their dimensions and impact on the life of a nation are bluntly reflected in the Secretary-General's report. In the words of the report, men, women and children who survive the explosion of the mine

> "often lose at least one limb and often suffer additional muscular damage, damage to internal organs, blindness and the loss of testes...". (*A/49/357, para.4*)

It is alarming that land-mines have killed or seriously injured over one million men, women and children over the past 20 years, most of them civilians. This prompts the conclusion that the real or potential threat of land-mines has become a global humanitarian problem that is even more difficult and tragic in developing countries that do not have the resources to implement full-scale programmes to reintegrate the injured into society.

Above and beyond constituting a threat to the life and integrity of persons, the existence of mine fields has an adverse impact in economic and social terms, including obstacles to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. This further impedes the process of reintegrating the injured into society, hamstrings the provision of basic services, and represents a serious obstacle in the way of economic development, particularly of activities aimed at rebuilding a country and humanitarian cooperation and peace-building activities undertaken by the United Nations in post-war periods.

The problem of mines and their impact on Central American society were addressed in the statement made by the Republic of Panama before the First Committee during the debate on the items relating to disarmament and international security. This statement dramatically highlighted the consequences of the explosion of such weapons, which bring death, injury and mutilation to civilians and particularly to innocent children and take a high human and economic toll. It stressed the price paid by Central Americans during the period of armed clashes as a focal point of the so-called cold war and a profitable market for the sale of mines.

The Organization of American States has established a mine-clearance programme for Central America. By its

resolution AG/1191 (XXII-1992), it also established a fund for contributions and pledges for countries wishing to cooperate in mine clearance. The process has made considerable strides with the assistance of our regional organization, the support of the Association for Democracy and Development, the Inter-American Defense Board and the cooperation of a number of donor States, members of the international community.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the fact that El Salvador has been able to declare the work of mine clearance ended, thanks not only to international assistance, but in large measure also thanks to the efforts and financing provided by the Government of El Salvador and the cooperation established between our Government, the political party *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacionál* and the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador.

It should also be mentioned that the Government of Honduras has announced the initiation of a programme to clear mines placed during the past decade on the borders between Honduras and Nicaragua and between Honduras and El Salvador. The first phase, which will begin in the provinces of Olancho and El Paraíso, bordering on Nicaragua, will involve the cooperation of nationals of Guatemala, Brazil, Colombia and Honduras, who will be trained by United States experts in mine clearance. This programme, we learn unofficially, will be under the auspices of the regional organization, the OAS, which will invest $1.5 million to remove almost 150,000 mines.

Despite these efforts, the Secretary General of the OAS has stated that to reactivate the process of mine clearance in Central America, the special fund will require some $3,200,000 by the end of this year. This could cover acceleration of the mine clearance programme in Nicaragua, with the cooperation of the OAS and friendly countries, and, in the near future, involve de-mining activities along the Costa Rica-Nicaragua border and possibly in Guatemala, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees set in train in April this year a risk-reduction and training programme in the area where refugees are to be relocated.

We wish to emphasize that we Central Americans are deeply concerned at the gravity of the problem of minefields, whose proliferation and indiscriminate effects are an obstacle to the economic and social development of our region. The consequences of the problem of mines, described in detail in the report of the Secretary-General, "An Agenda for Development", deserve greater attention and the resolve of the entire international community to eliminate them.

Faced with the need to strengthen and implement mine-clearance programmes, we exhort the members of the donor community to be generous in providing the necessary resources, particularly if they are convinced and understand that the problem has a human dimension, which is why international cooperation takes on a fundamentally human connotation.

Bearing in mind the experience Central America has gained in mine clearance, we think it important to make the following comments.

It is vital to have the assistance and full cooperation of all national sectors, and particularly of those parties directly involved in a conflict, to move along the process of mine clearance.

Non-governmental organizations, international agencies and private enterprises - particularly those with experience in mine clearance - should be invited to participate in such programmes.

We think there must be established, with the assistance of the relevant specialized body within the United Nations system, educational programmes to make people aware of the problem of mines. I am thinking particularly of children and of the inhabitants of rural areas who could be affected by the laying of mines.

It is necessary to promote among the parties directly involved in any conflict, a greater respect for humanitarian law, and in this instance to promote mapping of minefields, making it possible to locate mines in the post-conflict period, and facilitate clearance.

We are convinced that the problem of mines is not solely a matter of a lack of humanitarian ethics among the parties to any conflict. Rather, and perhaps to a greater degree, it concerns the ethics of those who produce and market them, particularly when they introduce more advanced technology, making mine-detection more difficult, while showing no interest in technological progress to make mine-detection easier in the post-conflict period.

We share the thinking of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report that I have mentioned, about the need to strengthen the capacity and coordination of the specialized bodies of the United Nations system, under

the general responsibility of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to ensure a coherent, sustained and wide-ranging approach to the problem until it has been completely eliminated.

Bearing in mind financial limitations in Central America, we support the establishment of a voluntary trust fund, which we believe will, given its humanitarian nature, enjoy the support of the international community and in particular the industrialized countries, so that we may have the resources required to speed up progress in dealing with the serious problem of mine clearance. It is therefore important to stress that the situation in the world will worsen by the day, becoming more frustrating and discouraging, if we do not get new and additional resources for that purpose. As the Secretary-General's report points out:

> "If the proliferation of land-mines were stopped in 1996, at current rates of funding and clearance it would still take almost 1,100 years to rid the world of the land-mines now in the ground." (*A/49/357, para. 66*)

We in the Central American countries fully support those countries that have already said the voluntary trust fund should be financed mainly by the countries that produce and export mines and by voluntary contributions by Member States.

On the basis of the experience gained in Central America, we do unhesitatingly recommend using regional organizations for mine clearance, an area in which we might strengthen ties of cooperation, although we feel that there must be close coordination with the world Organization as well.

I should like to put forward some additional recommendations that we consider might, in the short, medium and long term, help solve the problem of mines. During post-conflict periods humanitarian activities involved in United Nations peace-keeping and peace-building efforts should include mine-clearance programmes.

As a first step, we support the suspension of the export of anti-personnel land-mines; which pose an excessive threat to the civilian population, this measure might stem the rapid growth and proliferation worldwide of the problem of mines.We consider that the suspension should go beyond a limited moratorium on anti-personnel mines to cover suspension of production and export and to introduce transparency into the acquisition of such mines and ancillary devices, leading to agreements that could result in the adoption of measures to end the use and proliferation of land-mines the world over.

Mindful of our humanitarian responsibility, the countries of Central America therefore call on countries that manufacture and export mines and transfer the technology for their production to declare a moratorium on those activities. This would make a substantial contribution to the attainment of the goals set out in the draft resolution before the Assembly. We appreciate the unilateral steps taken by Spain and by Italy, and hope that they will motivate other mine-producing countries to take similar action. In that connection, Central America would warmly welcome the inclusion in draft resolution A/49/L.8 of the amendment proposed by Honduras in document A/49/L.11 on the proclamation of a moratorium on the sale, export or any other transfer of anti-personnel mines until a new international regime regulating their import and production can be achieved. That provision would complement the First Committee's draft resolution the First Committee specifically on the export of anti-personnel mines.

We support the convening of an international review conference to amend the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and, in particular, its Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices.

We want the group of governmental experts established pursuant to resolution 48/79 to prepare the Convention review conference to be able as soon as possible to consider restrictions on the use of land-mines in internal conflicts, so as to make the Protocol broader and more effective in combating the proliferation and use of land-mines.

Apart from any progress in the adoption of measures and stipulations to regulate the matter of mines, we consider it important to set a code of conduct for the transfer of mines, especially for States that have not acceded to the Convention and its Protocol II, as proposed by the United Kingdom.

Bearing in mind that the problem of mines stems from the existence of internal and international armed conflicts and that most of these are in turn the result of factors touching on the economic and social structure of countries or of political, economic, strategic and

territorial disputes between States, we believe that at this stage of human development we should be more rational in our approach to world problems and international affairs.

On the domestic level, Governments — especially those of developing countries, where most conflict situations arise — should promote programmes for economic and social development that will address the root causes of despair, social tension and ultimately armed conflict. Internationally, Governments should encourage greater use of machinery for the peaceful settlement of conflicts, especially dialogue, direct negotiation and resort to international collective-security machinery, which would avoid confrontation and war between States.

If this proved possible, it would be a preventive measure that would avoid the quantitative and qualitative growth of the problem of mines, and would accord with the purposes of the Charter and the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" by implementing preventive measures for the maintenance of peace.

In conclusion, the countries of Central America reiterate our concern at the growing world-wide problem of mines, and especially at the human suffering it causes and the high social costs of the detonation of these devices. We fully support measures for the ultimate eradication of these concealed killers; we therefore support the draft resolution before the Assembly and are among its sponsors.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Last year, by adopting resolution 48/7 under the agenda item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", the Assembly recognized the tremendous threat posed to human life by the millions of land-mines laid in a large number of countries. Owing to their lethal nature and collateral effects, land-mines cause untold suffering and misery to innocent civilians, including women and children. Moreover, land-mines invariably disrupt post-conflict social- and economic-development programmes in infested States. Indeed, the proliferation and laying of land-mines without reference to legitimate defence requirements sow the seeds of multifaceted agony and tragedy, ranging from an increased number of civilian casualties to ever-widening disruption of development programmes in infested States. Yet it is unfortunate to note that, in spite of this humanitarian disaster, the laying of land-mines continues unabated; as observed by the Secretary-General, 2 million more land-mines are being laid annually world wide.

My delegation noted with appreciation the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine clearance, contained in document A/49/357. Although the report does not contain all-inclusive information about all mine-contaminated territories, including that of my country, it encompasses a meaningful examination of the global land-mine crisis and sets out workable recommendations and plans by whose implementing the issue at hand could, to a large extent, be addressed and its ensuing miseries alleviated.

The situation we are facing today as a result of land-mine use is a disastrous one. As observed by the Secretary-General in his report, the rapid proliferation of mines, together with the old-fashioned technology used in mine detection and clearance and the ever-increasing number of land-mines being laid annually worldwide, make the efforts of international community to address the global mine crisis a difficult and necessarily painstaking one.

My country has had bitter experience in this regard. During the Iran-Iraq war, nearly 16 million land-mines and unexploded sub-munitions were laid in my country, with a coverage of more than 4,000,300 hectares. Over the past five years we have succeeded in neutralizing and destroying 6 million mines without any access to documentation. However, it needs to be stressed that the mines laid in our once-occupied territories have taken huge expanses of our agricultural land out of production and rendered them unhabitable. More important, every now and then innocent civilians living in those regions are killed, injured or maimed, which places a significant burden upon our society.

Based on our experience, I wish to stress that the magnitude of the task facing international community in the area of mine clearance makes strengthening of international cooperation in this regard all the more essential. According to the Secretary- General's report, one of the unique characteristics of the land-mine problem is that very few of the States in which conflicts have resulted in land-mine contamination produce land-mines themselves and that more than 85 per cent of all uncleared land-mines in those States were purchased or transferred from roughly 40 mine-producing States. Hence, there is a need for concerted efforts by the international community to rid the world of this plague. At the same time, the responsibility of those States that have laid mines in foreign territories in providing effective assistance and information, including maps and documentation of land-mines to the infested States, cannot be overlooked.

My delegation supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for assistance in mine clearance. Moreover, we view the establishment of a central database for the collection of global data on the land-mine problem in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a step in the right direction. We believe that all countries, and particularly those that have laid mines in foreign territories, must shoulder their responsibilities to provide this newly established mechanism with all necessary information with a view to accelerating national and international endeavours in the area of mine clearance.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like, at the outset, to inform the international community, through the United Nations General Assembly that the 26th of October is a day of mourning in my country. On 26 October, 1911, my country was the victim of a colonialist invasion by Italy, during which Italy incarcerated thousands of Libyans in concentration camps prior to sending them into exile on Italian uninhabited islands where most of them perished from hunger and disease. The problem of those exiles is one of the most important issues still pending between my country and Italy, in addition to the question of mines.

The magnitude and gravity of the problems caused by mines left in the soil of many countries are such that their effects cannot be dealt with effectively without stronger participation by the United Nations, which should also coordinate international activities in this area. It was on this basis that my country's delegation welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of the last session of the General Assembly of an item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance." We also supported resolution 48/7, adopted at that session, in the hope that that resolution and any other additional measures that may be taken in the future would give an impetus to the endeavours of the international community to address the mines problem, including the urgent implementation of the provisions of earlier resolutions wherein the General Assembly recognized the threats that such mines pose to the lives of individuals and their extremely harmful economic and social effects that arise from the fact that mines and other unexploded devices make it difficult for individuals to move about in safety, hamper the expansion of land reclamation activities and deprive the areas where they are laid of social advancement and economic development.

My delegation's concern over the problem of mines stems from an early awareness of the threats that those devices pose to man and nature alike. My country was the first to draw attention to the problem. Now that the world has come to understand our concern, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is gratified by the increased international solidarity aimed at dealing with the mines problem. In addition, our deep concern over the question is due to the fact that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is one of the countries that still face this serious problem, since Libya was a theatre of military operations during the Second World War, at which time the combatants laid millions of mines in its soil, along its coastline and in its territorial waters. When the belligerents departed, they left behind vast minefields and booby trapped areas which they did not care to clear, and have shown no readiness to help in clearing even through the provision of the maps needed for such clearance. Those mines are estimated to be in the millions as confirmed by a study prepared by a group of high-level United Nations experts and published in document A/38/383. That study stated that:

> "in the various North African campaigns during the Second World War, for example, the Allied and the Axis forces laid many millions of such devices, mostly anti-tank mines. The estimates vary from some 5 million to as many as 19 million, according to different sources." (*A/38/383, annex, para. 7*)

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has suffered great losses as a result of the explosion of mines. There are no accurate or definitive estimates as to the size of those losses. However, a preliminary study prepared by specialized experts, whose statistics were included in our response to General Assembly resolution 48/7, estimated the number of dead at 5,670 and of those permanently injured at 4,935. Moreover, the mines killed 11,900 animals. Those estimates coincide with estimates in a study that has been published recently in a wide-circulation newspaper, which stated that:

> "the mines buried in Libya since the Second World War have, through 1983, killed 4,000 persons and 12,000 animals."

Furthermore, the presence of the mines in Libya's soil has impeded efforts aimed at implementing development plans and the expansion of land reclamation, as is confirmed in a recent study, which states that:

> "27 per cent of Libya's arable land is unusable because of the mines planted in it during the Second World War."

Over the years, the General Assembly has adopted many resolutions on war debris. These include resolutions 35/71, 36/188, 37/215, 38/162 and 39/167. All those resolutions have recognized the fact that clearance of war debris, including mines, is the responsibility of the countries that placed them and that such countries should provide adequate information and technical assistance towards their clearance, pay compensation for the losses and damage caused by them and pay for their removal and destruction. My country's delegation would like to take this opportunity to renew its support for those resolutions and to urge the General Assembly to take all necessary measures for their implementation. At the same time, my country's delegation believes that the General Assembly should determine the ways and means whereby we may achieve better international cooperation in removing and destroying mines, both old and new, because the continued presence of old mines is dangerous to human life and poses other dangers that are no less severe than those of more recent ones.

My country's delegation has studied the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/357. It is noteworthy that the report focused on special instances of the mines problem and, in particular, those resulting from internal conflicts over the past 20 years and their consequences. The report, however, does not mention the mines planted a long time ago, as in the case of those in my country's soil, which were planted over 50 years ago and which continue to cause the same suffering and wreak the same damage.

None the less, the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report to this session are welcomed by my country's delegation. We consider that the success of the United Nations system in translating those proposals into reality will depend on the cooperation of Member States in providing training, financial assistance and technical expertise to the affected countries, especially those which lack the necessary means and capabilities. This includes my country, which lacks the necessary expertise to clear the minefields planted in its territory during the Second World War.

Because the mines are spread over a wide area and are of different types, our capabilities for removing them are limited. Added to this is the lack of maps and documents identifying the location of minefields, which still constitute, on the one hand, a source of grave danger to human and animal life and, on the other, a central impediment to the implementation of economic and social development plans. The Libyan people, who have suffered and continue to suffer because of a war that was fought on their soil and that brought down upon them a great deal of destruction and pain and many deaths and disabilities, look to the United Nations system to provide them with direct assistance to remove those mines and to support their requests to the countries that planted the mines to provide the relevant information, reports, assistance and technical expertise for that purpose.

In conclusion, I should like to say that we have noted that the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.8 contains many positive elements. It does not, however, reflect some important concerns which we consider to be important. For this reason, my country's delegation spoke to the delegation of Germany which proposed to amendments that we hope will be accepted by the sponsors of the draft resolution so that it may be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): Despite the efforts of the United States and other countries, the global anti-personnel land-mine problem is getting worse. The simple fact is that more land-mines are deployed in armed conflicts every year than are removed by mine-clearance personnel. Some 64 countries are now littered with an estimated 85 million to 110 million anti-personnel land-mines; 65 million, or approximately two thirds of these, have been laid since 1978. Tragically, anti-personnel land-mines maim or kill hundreds of innocent civilians every week.

The burden imposed by the proliferation and indiscriminate use of these weapons is beyond calculation. The world must take stronger steps to address this problem, and the United States intends to remain at the forefront of that effort.

The United States has long been involved in efforts to assist countries plagued with active, deployed land-mines left behind after the termination of a war. We support de-mining efforts in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique, where we have worked closely with the United Nations. We are also supporting de-mining efforts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica. Significant land-mine problems also exist in Angola, Somalia, Liberia and Bosnia, but unrest in those countries has prevented the implementation of United States assistance.

In the last several years, the nature of the land-mine problem has changed dramatically. Some belligerents, especially in civil conflicts, began using land mines

indiscriminately as offensive weapons. Some also deployed long-lived mines in vast numbers, using new remote delivery systems. The total number of deployed land-mines jumped from many thousands to tens of millions. In short, the objective characteristics of the land-mine problem changed in fundamental ways.

Land-mines are a weapon of choice for many Government and insurgent groups. They are cheap, easy to manufacture and use, difficult to detect and expensive and dangerous to remove. Land-mines are easily exploited by adversary groups and sometimes are used as weapons of terror against civilian populations to generate fear, inhibit refugee repatriation, disrupt economic reconstruction and generally create chaos in fragile Governments.

It is all too common that combatants do not remove land-mines after a conflict ends. They are left for populations — and, more recently, peace-keepers — to deal with. Although international law requires records of minefields to be kept and measures to protect civilians to be taken, this is rarely done.

Addressing the horrible toll in innocent civilian casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines is a high priority of the Clinton Administration. Last month, in his speech before the United Nations, President Clinton proposed a first step towards the eventual elimination of anti-personnel land-mines. He proposed the negotiation of an anti-personnel-land-mine-control regime. This regime would restrict exports, production and stockpiles of anti-personnel land-mines.

While we recognize that anti-personnel land-mines are a legitimate weapon of war when used in accordance with the laws of armed conflict, we recognize also that their proliferation, coupled with widespread indiscriminate and irresponsible use, causes unnecessary human suffering. Ridding the world of these hidden killers would help save the lives of tens of thousands of men, women and innocent children in the years to come. Our ultimate goal is the eventual elimination of anti-personnel land-mines. We can move most effectively towards this goal as viable and humane alternatives are developed. We know this will take time.

In the interim, we are also seeking to strengthen Protocol II of the Convention on conventional weapons. The United States is pressing for substantial improvements to the land-mine Protocol, such as making it applicable to internal conflicts, requiring all mines to have a substantial metallic content to facilitate post-conflict detection, requiring that unmarked and unmonitored minefields employ only self-destructing/self-deactivating mines and establishing effective verification procedures.

In addition to these initiatives, we continue to call on all States to adopt moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines until a more permanent regime can be put in place. In October 1992 the United States adopted a unilateral export moratorium on anti-personnel land-mines. This moratorium was extended in 1993 for three years. I am pleased to note that in December 1993 the General Assembly unanimously adopted a United States-sponsored resolution, similar to our current draft resolution, calling for moratoriums on exports of land-mines that pose grave dangers to civilians. To date, 17 countries have adopted moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. Three others have export controls which serve as the equivalent of an export moratorium.

This draft resolution on assistance in land-mine clearance is clearly complementary to United States initiatives. Urgent and comprehensive action is necessary to address this tragic humanitarian problem. If our goal is to reduce innocent civilian casualties caused by anti-personnel land-mines, we must address both land-mines already emplaced and future controls on these weapons.

Mine-clearance assistance programmes are urgently needed to clean up this deadly debris of war, which is perhaps the world's most lethal form of pollution. Simultaneously, we must reverse the patterns of proliferation and indiscriminate use that are causing this horrible problem.

I applaud the United Nations for its action, and I am pleased to announce that the United States, as an original co-sponsor, fully supports this draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform delegations that the Assembly will take up agenda item 11, "Report of the Security Council", on Monday, 31 October 1994, in the afternoon instead of tomorrow, 26 October 1994, as originally scheduled.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.